

Making Plaster Track Casts

This is a simple alternative to using petroleum jelly, shellac, or plastics as separators.

Materials Needed:

1 can of regular cooking spray
Cardstock or cardboard strips, 2 inches (~ 5 cm) wide; various lengths, but at least 11 inches (~ 28 cm).
Paperclips
Plaster
Water
Small bag of salt
Paper cup or bowl for mixing
Plastic spoon

Procedure:

1. Select track. Form a ring with a cardboard strip with a circumference large enough to surround the track. Fasten ends with paperclips.
2. Encircle the track by pushing the ring into the sediment, at about 1 inch depth (~ 2.5 cm), leaving at least an inch of ring above to serve as the dam for the plaster.
3. Spray the track and exposed sediment within the ring with cooking spray.
4. Fill a small paper cup about 2/3 full with water. Spoon the plaster into the water and stir, until the plaster is the consistency of pancake batter. If the plaster is old, and won't reach desired consistency, stir in a little salt to get the plaster to "kick".
5. Pour enough plaster into the ring to cover the track and a good half inch of thickness within the mold.
6. Allow the plaster to harden (at least 30 minutes or more if the sediment is damp).
7. When the plaster is dry, remove the ring and lift out the cast.